

Beat: Miscellaneous

Puntland forces execute 13 al-Shabaab militants by firing squad

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USPA News - Security forces in the semi-autonomous Somali state of Puntland have executed thirteen al-Shabaab militants by firing squad, a judicial source said on Wednesday, marking the region's first known mass execution. Somali militants have threatened to avenge the killings.

The executions were carried out on Tuesday when a group of soldiers shot to death thirteen prisoners at an undisclosed location near the Somali port city of Bosaso in Puntland, according to a judicial source who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the press. "The thirteen prisoners went through the courts and they all confessed they were members of al-Shabaab," the source said, referring to the militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts that seized most of southern Somalia in the second half of 2006. The group has continued its violent insurgency and still controls parts of Somalia, primarily in its south-central regions. The Puntland news agency Garowe Online said six of the prisoners, including a woman, were convicted for their role in the killing of a prominent Islamic scholar outside a mosque in Bosaso in December 2011. The other seven men were convicted of terrorism-related charges for the killings of elders, scholars, an unidentified politician and Puntland officials. In addition to the prisoners, the judicial source said one soldier was also killed when he was struck by an errant bullet that had been fired by another soldier. No other details about the soldier's death were immediately available, and Puntland officials refused to provide a response. Al-Shabaab has condemned the executions, saying the prisoners were "innocent Muslims" and that the militant group would avenge the killings. Puntland security forces deployed additional troops in Bosaso in response to Wednesday's threat, but officials have indicated that they will execute more prisoners in the near future. Wednesday's killings marked the first known mass execution in Puntland's history. According to Amnesty International, at least one person was executed in Puntland in 2012 while the courts sentenced at least seven others to death. Six people were sentenced to death in Puntland in 2009, but it is likely that more executions have been carried out in recent years.

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